Import of fruits and vegetables

1092. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of fruits and vegetables imported during the last three years, variety-wise;

(b) the names of the countries from which these fruits/vegetables are imported;

(c) whether these variety of fruits/vegetables are available in the country; and

(d) if so, the compelling reasons for importing these fruits/vegetables?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) and (b) The details of quantity of fruits and vegetables imported from the various countries during the last three years, country-wise variety-wise and value-wise, are contained in the publication "Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade of India: Volume-II (Imports) - Annual Number" published by Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, which is available in the library of the Parliament.

(c) and (d) some of the fruits and vegetables being imported in the country may not be indigenously available. Domestic production of any commodity is seldom a ground for imposing restriction on import of such commodities. The Quantitative Restrictions on imports, which were earlier maintained on balance of payment grounds have been removed in line with the economic liberalization policy and also in accordance with the Country's commitment to multilateral trading regime.

Crisis in plantation sector

1093. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the problems of plantation workers due to falling prices and crisis in plantation sector;

(b) whether price stabilization fund is operational as a package of measures announced for revival; and

(c) the other steps taken to revive tea, coffee and rubber industries in Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura and Assam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) The continuous fall in prices of tea and coffee, coupled with high cost of production, has adversely affected the economy of the plantations, resulting in some tea and coffee plantations being abandoned or under lock out in the States of West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Tripura. This has in turn affected the livelihood of a number of plantation workers.

(b) and (c) Government of India is fully alive to the problems being faced by the plantation sector and a number of steps have been taken to deal with the situation. In order to provide relief to the growers of tea, coffee, natural rubber and tobacco, the Government has approved the establishment of a Price Stabilisation Fund with an initial corpus of Rs. 500 crores. The other steps taken include restructuring of the term loan as well as crop loans availed of by the growers of coffee and tea from the commercial banks, interest subsidy to the growers of coffee, financial incentives for the export of tea, coffee and rubber programmes for quality upgradation, innovative marketing strategies in the International as well as domestic markets to arrest the decline in exports and to increase the domestic consumption, reduction in excise duty on tea and increase in customs duty on import of tea and coffee etc. The programmes and schemes of the 10th Five Year Plan have also been formulated to ensure long term development of the plantation sector and are targeted at increasing productivity, technology upgradation, value addition, product diversification and improving the quality and marketability of these commodities.

In the case of tea, Government has also appointed Export Committees to make an in-depth study of the closed tea gardens in the States of West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Tripura and to suggest a package of measures for their viability and revival.

Industrial policy for development of NER

1094. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any set industrial policy for the development of the North-Eastern Region;